

Factsheet

Children and young people's health

Improving children's health is important for everyone – families, communities and Government.

Having a healthy childhood allows children and young people to make the most of their opportunities in life.

Poor health (physical, emotional and mental) can be a barrier to enjoying life and fulfilling potential.

The Children's Plan Commitment

The Children's Plan made a commitment to publish a children and young people's health strategy in 2008.

The strategy will be developed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Health and will consider how health services can work better to improve children's health working with schools and other partners.

Context

During the Children's Plan consultation children, young people and their parents gave us their views on what health issues they see as most important.

These views reflected what the health issues are for children of different ages:

- 0-7 year olds: there is a key role for health visitors e.g. to give information to new parents when their baby is born to help them cope with the challenges
- 8-13 year olds: children need to take more responsibility for their own health and need education to help them deal with peer pressure
- 14-19 year olds: sexual health, mental health and substance misuse (e.g. drugs and alcohol) are important areas where health information and treatment for teenagers is important

The Children's Plan responded to this with a commitment to:

- More support for parents, including better information e.g. building on the 'red book' on children's health that every parent receives when their child is born
- Investment of £225 million in safe places to play including 30 new supervised play parks for 8-13 year olds in disadvantaged areas
- A review of the primary curriculum in schools so that it supports the development of social and emotional skills and a review of mental health services for children and adolescents.

There was also a very clear message in the consultation about the importance of families in supporting children and young people's health with parents having responsibility for things like:

- Food and exercise
- A healthy environment for their children (e.g. not smoking)
- Teaching their children hygiene
- Setting a good example

However, parents also said that they need support to help them in this role.

In particular:

- Prompt access to health services when they are needed
- Easy access e.g. a single point of contact and information to 'navigate' services



Good health is vital if children and young people are to enjoy their childhood and achieve their full potential." **Quote from the Children's Plan**

"If we can establish good habits in childhood, this will provide the basis for lifelong health and wellbeing." **Quote from the Children's Plan**

"Need an information pack like a bounty pack for important moments like primary school...support families and children going through transition points like going to primary schools."

"A personal service, speaking to someone on the end of the phone would be good."

"There is peer pressure from friends to drink and they call me boring because I don't drink."

Questions

The Department is interested to hear your views on the idea of a children's and young people's health strategy. If you would like to feed in your comments to this continuing dialogue, please email us at timetotalk.feedback@dcf.gsi.gov.uk stating which fact sheet and which questions you are answering.

Considering the information overleaf and above tell us:

- 1 Why good health matters for children and young people.
- 2 The biggest challenges for keeping children and young people healthy.
- 3 How satisfied are you with the healthcare facilities available in your area?
- 4 How could these services be improved so that they meet the needs of children, young people and their families?